



# St Mary's, Thakeham

## Safeguarding Policy

### Introduction

The safeguarding and on-going care of all members of our church family lies at the heart of the work of the PCC. We are very fortunate to have such a proactive PCC who know the church family well and keeps in regular contact with them.

We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. As a result, we ensure that all PCC members maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' and feel able to raise concerns to the Priest-in-Charge or Parish Safeguarding Officer about a child or young people<sup>1</sup> at risk, or a vulnerable adult who may be at risk or a member of our church family whose behaviour may present a risk to a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

We will provide an environment in which every member of our church family feels safe, secure, valued, respected and confident.

This document sets out the safeguarding of children, young persons and vulnerable adults policy of the St Mary's, Thakeham, replicating that of the Church of England. It has been informed by the Joint Safeguarding Statement between the Church of England and the Methodist Church, with whom we work jointly on many aspects of safeguarding policy on a covenant basis.

The Church of England safeguarding policy statement is based on **5 foundations** and offers **6 overarching policy commitments**:

- Promoting a Safer environment and culture
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

<sup>1</sup>The phrase "young people/person" means any individual(s) aged 14 to 17 years old

<sup>2</sup>Section 6 Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 defines a 'vulnerable adult' as "...a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired".

This policy applies to all Church Bodies<sup>3</sup> and Church Officers<sup>4</sup>. Full understanding of, and adherence to, this policy should lead to a deepening in the understanding of, and respect for, the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults as people of faith in the life of the Church.

This Policy Statement is supported by more detailed Practice Guidance and Reference documents which can be downloaded from: <https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/safeguarding-children-vulnerable-adults.aspx>

Building on this, Church bodies may provide additional local procedures and guidance in line with the House of Bishops policy and practice guidance.

## Safeguarding Policy Statement

Safeguarding means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture. This means we will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults, work to prevent abuse from occurring, seek to protect those that are at risk of being abused and respond well to those that have been abused. We will take care to identify where a person may present a risk to others and offer support to them whilst taking steps to mitigate such risks.

The Church of England affirms the ‘Whole Church’ approach to safeguarding. This approach encompasses a commitment to consistent policy and practice across all Church bodies, Church Officers and that everyone associated with the Church, who comes into contact with children, young people and adults, has a role to play.

The Church will take appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all and to practice fully and positively Christ's Ministry towards children, young people and adults; to respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm.

## Foundations

In developing and implementing the Safeguarding Policy, the Church of England, is guided by the following foundations.

### 1. Gospel

The Church is called to share the good news of God's salvation through Jesus Christ. The life of our communities and institutions is integral to how we address this task. The good news speaks of welcome for all, with a particular regard for those who are most vulnerable, into a community where the value and dignity of every human being is affirmed and those in positions of responsibility and authority are truly trustworthy. Being faithful to our call to share the gospel. therefore compels us to take with the utmost seriousness the challenge of preventing abuse from happening and responding well where it has.

<sup>3</sup> Church Bodies includes PCCs, diocesan bodies, cathedrals, religious communities, theological training institutions and the National Church Institutions. This policy will apply to the whole of the provinces of Canterbury and York (including the Diocese in Europe subject to local variations/modifications). There is also an expectation that the policy will apply to the Channel Islands and Sodor and Man unless there is specific local legislation in a jurisdiction that would prevent adoption.

<sup>4</sup> A “Church Officer” is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid.

## **2. Human Rights and the Law**

The Church recognises the personal dignity and rights of all children, young people and adults, as enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1998 and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Safeguarding work is undertaken within a legislative framework supported by government guidance which sets out a range of safeguarding duties, responsibilities and best practice.

## **3. Core Principles**

The following key principles underpin the Church's approach to safeguarding practice:

- The welfare of the child, young person and vulnerable adult is paramount<sup>6</sup>;
- Integrity, respect and listening to all;
- Transparency and openness;
- Accountability;
- Collaboration with key statutory authorities and other partners;
- Use of professional safeguarding advice and support both inside and outside the Church;
- A commitment to the prevention of abuse;
- The active management of risk;
- Promoting a culture of informed vigilance;
- Regular evaluation to ensure best practice.

## **4. Good Safeguarding Practice**

The following key features<sup>7</sup> will help Church bodies<sup>8</sup> promote and maintain a safer culture that protects and promotes the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. These features are :

- A leadership commitment, at all levels, to the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
- A safeguarding policy available to Church Officers ;
- A clear line of accountability within the Church for work on safeguarding;
- Clear reporting procedures to deal with safeguarding concerns and allegations;
- Clear roles for Church Officers;

<sup>6</sup>In the event of any perceived or potential conflict of interest the welfare of any children and young people involved will always take precedence over all adults

<sup>7</sup>These are based on Safe from Harm Home Office, 1993, and the statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

<sup>8</sup>It is acknowledged that the level and depth of arrangements that meet these key features will be dependent on the size and resources available to an individual church body

- Practice and services informed by on- going learning, review and by the views of children, young people, families and vulnerable adults;
- Safer recruitment procedures in place;
- Clear arrangements for support and/or supervision;
- Safeguarding training for all Church Officers working with or in contact with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults ;
- Effective working with statutory and voluntary sector partners;
- Publicly advertised arrangements for children, young people and vulnerable adults to be able to speak to an independent person, as required;
- Complaints and whistleblowing procedures that are well publicised;
- Effective information sharing;
- Good record keeping.

## Policy Commitments

Based on the foundations outlined above St Mary's, Thakeham commits to:

### 1. Promoting a safer environment and culture

All Church Officers will respect all children, young people and vulnerable adults and promote their well-being.

The Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults. It will work to continue to strengthen and review these environments. This will be done by training, support, communication, learning, governance and quality assurance processes.

The Church will strive to support all Church Officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power. It will ensure that processes are in place that listen to and advocate on behalf of children, young people and vulnerable adults within the knowledge that they will be cared for.

### 2. Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church

The Church will select and vet all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the Church, in accordance with the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance.<sup>9</sup>

It will train and equip Church Officers to have the confidence and skills they need to care and support children, young people and vulnerable adults and to recognise and respond to abuse. This will be done by supporting the roll-out of consistent and accessible safeguarding training in accordance with House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance

<sup>10</sup>Safeguarding Training and Development Practice Guidance

### **3. Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation**

Anyone who brings any safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or non-current abuse to the notice of the Church will be responded to respectfully and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child and adult safeguarding procedures and the House of Bishops safeguarding policy and practice guidance.

All safeguarding work will be recorded in line with the House of Bishops safeguarding practice guidance.

All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations, that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities, will be reported via the diocesan safeguarding adviser or designated safeguarding adviser/officer in another church body to the appropriate statutory authorities. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person.

All Church Officers will cooperate with the statutory authorities in all cases.

In responding to concerns or allegations of abuse relating to Church Officers, the Church will act in accordance with the requirements of criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law, and so will respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the victim/survivor and the subject of concerns or allegations.

### **4. Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons**

The Church will endeavour to offer care and support to all those that have been abused, regardless of the type of abuse, when or where it occurred.

The Church is committed to continuing to learn how to respond in a supportive and healing way to the needs of those who have suffered abuse.

Those who have suffered abuse within the Church will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. The Church will respond to any disclosure of abuse in accordance with House of Bishops policy and practice guidance. This will be done in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies in accordance with criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law. They will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support - according to the agreed need.

An appropriate pastoral response to the family, parish, congregation or order will be considered, with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice.

### **5. Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons**

The Church in exercising its responsibilities to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse will endeavour to respect the rights under criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law of an accused Church Officer including the clergy. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Church inquiry processes. As the process progresses additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered.

The Church will take responsibility for ensuring that steps are taken to protect others when any Church Officer is considered a risk to children, young people and vulnerable adults. This will be done by working to mitigate any identified risks according to a safeguarding agreement.

Church Officers who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse belong to families, congregations and church communities. The Church will be mindful of the need to provide

support to members of families, parishes and congregations affected by the Church Officers in such situations.

## **6. Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others**

The Church, based on the message of the gospel, opens its doors to all. It will therefore endeavour to offer pastoral care and support to any member of the church community whom may present a known risk.

The Church will ensure that any risk has been assessed and is being managed in a safeguarding agreement in accordance with House of Bishops policy and practice guidance. This will be done in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies in accordance with criminal, civil and ecclesiastical law.

### **Putting the policy into action**

All parts of the Church of England must adopt or take account of this Policy Statement within their own safeguarding policy. The Policy Statement must actively underpin all safeguarding work within the Church and the drive to improve safeguarding practice. All Church bodies should ensure that:

- All Church Officers have access to this Policy Statement;
- The Policy Statement is promoted and publicised;
- The Church's safeguarding message is communicated as reflected in the policy;
- They have a "Promoting a Safer Church" action plan in place that sets out, in line with national and local priorities, how the policy is being put into action and is reviewed regularly.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### *The Priest-In-Charge (P-I-C):*

- Has overall responsibility for the safety and nurture of every church member. S/he will respond, without delay, to every concern made that a person for whom we are responsible may have been harmed;
- Is committed to Safer Recruitment;
- Will co-operate fully with statutory agencies during any investigation concerning a member of the church community;
- Will seek to ensure that anyone for whom we have pastoral responsibility who has suffered abuse, is offered support that meets their needs.

#### *Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO):*

- The position of Safeguarding Officer is reviewed annually at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting;
- The PSO (Thakeham St Mary's Church) and the PSO (Sullington St Mary's Church), will work together to maintain the Safeguarding file, SQP (Simple Quality Protects) available to be seen in the Parish Office, against which all safeguarding standards are assessed;
- The PSO will ensure that the Church safeguarding policies and procedures are always effective and comply with the law;
- The PSO will maintain a systematic, secure record of safeguarding incidents;
- The PSO will present an anonymised written and/or verbal report concerning safeguarding at every PCC meeting and the APCM;
- The PSO will have in place other policies which support safeguarding.

## **Confidentiality**

- All matters relating to safeguarding are confidential and will only be shared on a 'need-to-know' basis;
- The PCC must be aware that they have a responsibility to share information with the P-I-C or PSO in order to safeguard children, young persons and vulnerable adults;
- The PCC must be aware that they cannot promise to keep secrets if doing so might compromise the safety or wellbeing of a child, young person or vulnerable adult;

## **Training**

- ALL members of the PCC will complete basic on-line safeguarding training;
- The Priest-in-Charge and the Churchwardens will achieve higher level qualifications relevant to their role;
- The PSO will maintain a record of training;
- The Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed at least annually and made available publicly, either on-line or by other means.

If you are concerned that someone you know is at risk of, or is being abused, or presents a risk to others please seek advice from a Safeguarding Adviser or if necessary report the matter to the Local Authority Social Care Services or the Police without delay